

THE ARSI OROMO



WALKESSA

The Arsi are one of the largest Oromo groups inhabiting much of central, south central and eastern Oromia. The Arsi Oromo are members of the Barentu moiety and live as part of the Sikkoo-Mandoo Gadaa federation.

THE ARSI HEROES

The Arsi Oromo had made names for themselves even before Menelik's armies started making moves against them. The Arsi Oromo defended their land against imperial aggression for more than 6 years, severely weakening Menelik's armies. Heroes such as Lenjiso Digga made sure everyone far and wide knew the Arsi were not to be taken lightly, defeating Menelik's armies several times across the highlands of south central Oromia.

THE LAND OF THE ARSI

The Arsi Oromo primarily live in the three zones of Arsi, West Arsi, and Bale. The Arsi Oromo occupy lands such as large parts of the Great Rift Valley, the Arsi and Bale mountains and plains, where rivers such as Wabe, Weyib, and Genale rise from. These lands are also home to most of Oromia's highest mountains.

THE PEOPLE OF THE SIKKOO-MANDOO

The Arsi Gadaa system is the Sikkoo-Mandoo Gadaa federation meeting under the Odaa Robaa in Bale. The system was severely weakened after the imperial wars against the Arsi Oromo, but has been revived recently and is a major part of Arsi Oromo traditional celebrations today.

THE ELDERS OF PEACE

Jaarsummaa is one of the most advanced and effective conflict resolution and criminal justice systems ever devised. The system relies on a group of elders whose power means that no party can move against anyone while a case is being handled by them. The Jaarsummaa system to date handles some of the heaviest cases and is credited with a high level of security in all of the Arsi lands



Sehin Tewahebe

SIINQEE

The Siinqee is a system symbolized by an embellished stick that empowers women in the Gadaa system. Arsi Oromo women take Siinqee very seriously and bestow the honor upon a newlywed, inducting her into their sisterhood.





Abinet Teshome



Abinet Teshome



Abinet Teshome

MARRIAGE AMONG THE ARSI

Among the Arsi marriages are ways of connecting clans (gosa) together and, thus, are taken very seriously by families. One notable way of marrying among the Arsi is for the man to offer his sister or someone close to him (as long as she is part of his gosa) to the gosa of the girl he wants to marry. This exchange style marriage has been going out of favor lately, but was a very popular method just a few decades ago.

THE MAKING OF AN ARSI OROMO

If someone wants to become an Arsi, to be a member of an Arsi gosa, then he is taken in by a family in a ceremony where the patriarch of that family suckles the person while undergoing a ritual blessing. Once this ceremony is over, the person becomes an Arsi Oromo.

THE LAND OF CEREALS AND DAIRY

The Arsi Oromo have a very rich culinary culture that includes cereals, dairy, and meat. Some of the most popular dishes in Arsi are the Marqaa, Caccabsaa, Cukkoo, Marmaree, etc. The Arsi are also dairy lovers and even have songs about their beloved cows.



Arganne Markos

THE TIRRII

Music in Arsi is usually a communal affair where a group of men sing one line and a group of women follow with the next line. This same musical style is accompanied by the Tirrii dance which is done in two rows of men and women.

ARSI AND BALE

While some people do refer to themselves as Bale, most agree that the Arsi and Bale Oromo are part of the same group of Oromos. The Arsi and Bale Oromos share a Gadaa, an Odaa in the Odaa Robaa and most of their customs and traditions.



WOMEN'S BLESSING

Among the Arsi Oromo, the blessing of mothers, and of Siinquee women is considered sacred. As such, during ceremonies women of the Siinquee sisterhood stand facing each other in two rows and hold their Siinquee sticks above their heads creating a canopy of sorts. People walk under this canopy holding grass while the women bless them. Severely weakened after the imperial wars against the Arsi Oromo, but has been revived recently and is

a major part of Arsi Oromo traditional celebrations today.

Abinet Teshome

